



BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF VIETNAM, LAOS AND KAMPUCHEA  
(EA/VLK)

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TO - [redacted]

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State Dept. review completed

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Proposal for US Assistance  
to Non-Communist Khmer Resistance

Rationale for Support for the Non-Communist Khmer Resistance

Lack of a non-communist alternative in Kampuchea means either a solution accommodating Vietnam's domination of Kampuchea (Indochina), or a restoration of Khmer Rouge/Chinese influence in Kampuchea. This stark choice guarantees continued conflict, and, perhaps, no solution.

A Chinese oriented solution or even movement toward such a solution would split ASEAN and lead to early accommodation at least by Indonesia and Malaysia with Vietnam. The Soviets would remain entrenched in Vietnam, since the Chinese threat level would remain high.

A satisfactory solution requires compromise. Only a third component would permit a compromise in the foreseeable future. Vietnam cannot compromise with the Khmer Rouge. China cannot accept Vietnamese domination of Kampuchea. ASEAN cannot remain united on its strategy unless a compromise solution (non-Viet or non-Chinese) remains a viable possibility.

A third force is thus desirable. Is it also feasible? ASEAN would define a viable third force or resistance along the

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following lines, and a consensus among Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia seems emerging, which judges such to be feasible. The emphasis would be on its political rather than its military role:

Definition of a Viable Resistance

ASEAN seeks to develop a viable, credible non-communist resistance movement which can become a significant factor in an eventual political settlement in Kampuchea. ASEAN's goal is not to develop a large-scale guerrilla movement which would attempt to drive the Vietnamese army out of Kampuchea through armed force. The ASEAN views of a viable non-communist element, with which we concur, can be summarized as follows:

1. It must be relatively self-sustaining, i.e. possess leadership able to train, plan and execute with minimal guidance from the Thais or other countries.
2. It must have good recruitment potential, so that there is a reasonable expectation that it can expand; it should have popular sympathy, in comparison to other political factions, and have/claim on nationalism.
3. It should have enough capability to defend itself so that it is not vulnerable to being wiped out by a

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single PAVN or DK attack.

4. It must be capable of playing a significant and autonomous role in a political settlement which would follow withdrawal of Vietnamese forces as part of a negotiated settlement.

5. It should have international credibility as a force which can play the role described in points 1-4 above.

Risks of Non-US Involvement

Although the amount of assistance contemplated and required to build such a resistance is small and within ASEAN's means, ASEAN attaches great symbolic importance to an American contribution. Tangible US aid would indicate clearly our genuine support for the ASEAN strategy and imply our rejection of what ASEAN perceives to be the Chinese goal of restoring Pol Pot to power.

Failure to respond to Singapore/ Malaysia/ Thailand, or, in effect, ASEAN's insistent calls for US involvement:

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- a) Risks US credibility with ASEAN by calling into question the seriousness of our support for ASEAN and its strategy. We have stressed our reliability in every serious exchange with ASEAN since the advent of the new administration. Failure to respond would also be interpreted by some as further evidence of a US tilt toward China at ASEAN's expense.
- b) ASEAN will be disillusioned and at least Indonesia and Malaysia would most likely move toward its accommodationist wing.
- c) The non-communist resistance will falter for lack of external, particularly US, support.
- d) Thailand would be left in the lurch, caught between the loss of ASEAN consensus, and its growing and sensitive relationship with China. Political instability in Thailand would seem likely.
- e) US interests would be jeopardized by the disillusionment of ASEAN, the breakdown of the common strategy toward Kampuchea, internal and external pressure on our ally Thailand, the dilemma posed by a serious rift between most of ASEAN and China, and an entrenched Soviet position in Thailand.

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Summary of Rationale

Rationale is thus:

- a) A third force is needed to permit a compromise solution, resolving conflicting basic interests of all powers concerned.
- b) ASEAN and the non-communist resistance seek our involvement; failure to respond would have consequences injurious to our objectives and interests;
- c) As a limited, but critical purpose, we can prevent the split of ASEAN and the breakdown of the common strategy, with or without the probability of ultimate success of the resistance or the strategy.

Action Options

In realistic terms, none of the options available offers an effective panacea. It can be argued that the U.S. should not become involved beyond strengthening its commitment to Thailand's defense and continuing the policy of diplomatic and economic pressure on Vietnam, with ASEAN in the lead. Assisting the non-communist resistance in the framework of a coalition with the DK can best be rationalized in political terms because its mili-

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tary potential is seriously limited. To organize, arm, train and support a truly effective resistance in the force strength needed to seriously contest the Vietnamese presence would require a financial commitment far exceeding anything envisaged in current policy and would again actively inject the U.S. into a geographic area where its security interests are indirect and essentially minor.

Rejecting absolute advantages, it can nevertheless be argued that U.S. covert support in a limited dimension would represent a gesture of solidarity with the non-communists and would, more importantly, respond to growing imperatives derived from relations with ASEAN. This argument recognizes that ASEAN collectively is a significant ally of the U.S. in Southeast Asia. It also recognizes that the U.S. must be responsive to ASEAN initiatives concerning Indochina if ASEAN is to be the lead element in the policy implementation process. At the same time, care must be exercised not to become ensnared in these initiatives nor to bear their cost unilaterally.

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Proposed Assistance Package for Non-Communist Khmer Resistance

In light of the above, we propose a limited, non-military package along the following lines:

Overt:

-- Increased humanitarian food assistance on the border.

An increase of approximately one million dollars has already been programmed from FY 1981 funds. We will consider augmentation in FY 82 as circumstances dictate.

-- We would increase FMS credits to Thailand. No direct transfer to Kampuchea would be envisaged. We have already reprogrammed an additional \$3.4 million in FMS credits for Thailand from FY 81 funds, telling the Thais that the increase was in recognition of Thailand's increased burden associated with Kampuchea. We will also look for a small additional sum in FMS credits in FY 82.

Covert:



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